

## NAPOLEON—HIS LIST ILLNESS AND POSTMORTEM <sup>1</sup>

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A little over a hundred years ago a man died on a lonely little island in the Atlantic, his baker's dozen of followers and himself surrounded by a garrison of three thousand men and a squadron of ships. So great was the hysteria in England, that his advent on this rock ten miles long by six broad, twelve hundred miles from the nearest land, was marked by an increase of the military population from two hundred to three thousand. It was even necessary to visit him almost daily in order to ascertain that he had not escaped. This hatred of the man could well be understood for he had defied and set at naught that most sacred of English institutions, Toryism, the English synonym of Bourbonism. The upheaval had begun with his ragged followers in Italy, reached its apogee at Tilset, and began its recrudescence through sheer exhaustion after the disastrous Russian campaign. One would think that this man so overwhelmed by opprobrium, this drinker of children's blood, given to incest, murder, robbery, and every crime in the calendar, would by the mere weight of his iniquities lie heavily in his simple unmarked grave beneath that willow tree, never to be known in his true light by the world at large; yet such was not to be a fact, for in 1840 his body was received with the deepest affection by the Nation he had raised to glory from the welter of revolution. No funeral has ever been so filled with human emotions, the ceremonies lasted from the 8th to the 15th of December and were attended by practically all of France and his magnificent sarcophagus at the home for wounded soldiers which he inaugurated, is still visited by thousands who gaze in reverence and awe at the earthly home of the man who almost struck the death blow at feudalism. It was he who said that in fifty years the

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world would either be Cossack or free, and this prediction was fulfilled nine years ago with a stupendous sacrifice of ten million men.

I possess what I am told is his first biography in English; it was published in London in 1797 immediately after his Italian campaign. Since then he has been the subject of thousands of volumes; his last biography translated from the German has sold to nearly one hundred and fifty thousand copies. What is the secret of this seemingly inexhaustible interest in Napoleon? I, personally, believe that it lies in the fact of the appeal his life has had to the romance in all of us. Here was a man of the people so poor that he often went hungry, yet so filled with talent and the fire of genius that he attained the heights of glory and power. His military genius unfortunately clouds for many of us gifts of mind fully equal; he gave France a great code of laws, he built wonderful roads, he beautified his beloved country with remarkable gems of architecture, he established free schools for the poor, stimulated French industry by every means at his command, and even in the midst of his Russian campaign designated who was to sing during the season at the Paris opera. I have a letter from Berthier, his Chief of Staff, to Bessieres, Commander in Chief of the Imperial Guard, in which Berthier asks Bessieres to incorporate in the Guard ten chasseurs and to ask Napoleon's permission to do so. The Guard at one time numbered fifty-six thousand men and its Commander in Chief could not select ten of its members without the Emperor's approval. This is but one example in a thousand of the grasp of detail which this man forced upon himself. He raised to wealth and power upon their merits alone the great majority of his marshals and was generous to a fault, even in the face of defection, as evidenced in his treatment of some of them on his return from Elba.

Napoleon's household at St. Helena consisted of General Bertrand, wife and three children; Count Montholon, wife and two children; Count LasCases and son, and General Gourgoud. Barry E. O'Meara, Surgeon of the Beller-

ophon, had volunteered his medical services and remained as Napoleon's medical attendant until 1818, when he was banished from the island by Sir Hudson Lowe, after violent quarrels with the Governor respecting social visits to Napoleon, and his refusal to tell the Governor the purport of his conversations with the Emperor. On July 25, 1818, he made his farewell visit to Napoleon despite an order from the Governor, interdicting him from any further interview with General Bonaparte or the inhabitants at Longwood.

Dr. O'Meara states that Napoleon suffered considerably from nausea, and seemed in very poor health, yet he received no medical advice six months later, when Dr. Stokoe, Surgeon of "The Conqueror," saw him a few times. Dr. Stokoe sailed for England on January 21st, 1819, and Napoleon, despite considerable illness, received no medical advice until the arrival of Dr. Antommarchi who with the consent of the British government arrived at St. Helena on September 19th, 1819. Francesco Antommarchi was born in Corsica in 1780 and received his medical degree at Pisa. He was Professor of Anatomy at Florence in 1819 when he was selected by Cardinal Fesch, and Madame Mere, Napoleon's mother, as medical advisor to the Emperor at St. Helena. Antommarchi accepted the commission and in company with two priests and two domestics travelled slowly through Germany, arriving in London on April 19th, 1819. Here he met with all kind of difficulties and numberless delays. Offers and insinuations were thrown out in order to prevent his departure for St. Helena. It was then that he had frequent conversations with O'Meara and Stokoe in reference to Napoleon. He was, however, finally permitted to sail.

Napoleon's health became progressively worse in July, 1820, and by September the attacks of vomiting, pain in the gastric region, headache, anorexia and constipation became more frequent. During remissions in these attacks he was still able to be about, but by December 26th he could hardly make a few steps without extreme fatigue.

His condition gradually grew worse, but in February and March, 1821, he was able on two or three occasions to drive about the garden in a calèche for a few minutes. By the first of April the vomiting, gastric pain, fever, prostration and weakened heart action became much more frequent and the mental anguish and depression noticeable for many months became aggravated. At this time Dr. Archibald Arnott, Surgeon of the 20th Regiment, was called in consultation and thereafter saw Napoleon frequently with Antommarchi. On April 15th the celebrated Napoleonic will was dictated. On the night between the 24th and 25th he vomited incessantly; this continued throughout the whole day of the 25th. On the morning of the 27th Napoleon began to have gastric hemorrhages as evidenced by the "coffee ground" color of vomited material. His bowel movements at this time were of a black color. The heart action was weak and he was covered with cold perspiration. With much effort he could only trace a part of the 18th codicil to his will. On the 28th he gave his final instructions to Antommarchi as follows: "After my death I wish you to make an autopsy. Do not let any English physician other than Dr. Arnott touch my body. Preserve my heart in alcohol and deliver it to Marie Louise in Parma, give her all the details of my death. Examine well my stomach, and make a detailed report to my son. Indicate to him what remedies or mode of life he can pursue which will prevent his suffering from a similar disease. This is very important for my father died of a scirrhus of the pylorus with symptoms very much like mine."

On the 29th he became delirious, by 1 p.m. his mind was clear and Antommarchi asked his permission to apply a vesicatory to the epigastric region. He replied, "If you wish it. I do not expect the least improvement from it but I am nearing my end and I wish you to judge of my appreciation of what you have done for me by my resignation." On May 4th the end was near. He seemed in complete collapse, the pulse was intermittent and weak, singultus, cold sweat and dyspnea were present. Throughout that day a terrific tropical storm raged, rain fell in

torrents, and most of the trees in Longwood were uprooted. On the morning of the 5th many gastric hemorrhages occurred, the vomiting and singultus were continual. At 5 a.m. he was still delirious, the last articulate words being "Tête d'armée." Coma supervened, the body cold with tetanic spasms, the pulse imperceptible, the dyspnea excessive, the respiration stertorous. At eleven minutes to six respiration and heart action ceased entirely. England's prisoner had escaped. In Arnott's own words "The scene of sorrow Longwood House presented on the evening that great and extraordinary man breathed his last will never be erased from my memory."

The autopsy was held twenty and a half hours after his death by Dr. Antommarchi in the presence of Drs. Thomas Shortt, Post Medical Officer; Archibald Arnott, Surgeon, 20th Regiment; Charles Mitchell, Surgeon, H. M. S. Vigo; Francis Burton, Surgeon, 66th Regiment and Matthew Livingston, Surgeon, H. C. Service. The body appeared quite fat, on incision about an inch thick on the sternum, and one and a half inches on the abdomen. On cutting through the cartilages of the ribs, which were in a great part ossified, the thoracic cavity was exposed. There were adhesions and about three ounces of a yellowish fluid in the left pleural cavity. The upper lobe of the left lung contained several tuberculous excavations. The right lung was normal, but the right pleural cavity contained eight ounces of fluid. Both lungs were of a normal color and crepitant. The pericardium was normal, the heart of natural size but thickly covered with fat. The auricles and ventricles were empty of blood and presented no pathological changes. The aorta was normal. The abdomen was greatly distended, and on incision the peritoneum was found covered with a viscous fluid. On the anterior surface of the stomach at the lesser curvature near the pylorus was a complete perforation large enough to admit the little finger. This opening was completely closed with adhesions. On opening the stomach it was found filled with a large quantity of "coffee ground" material of an acid putrefying odor, and the internal surface of the stomach

was almost completely covered by a carcinomatous mass; only a small part of the cardiac extremity seemed free of the disease. All the adjacent lymph nodes were greatly enlarged and cancerous. The liver and spleen were engorged with blood, and there were many adhesions between the liver and stomach, but otherwise these two organs were normal. The gall-bladder was also normal. The urinary bladder contained small calculi. The right kidney was normal, the left kidney was slightly displaced. The brain was not examined.

Antommarchi sutured and washed the body, and for the last time loving hands dressed it in the familiar uniform of the Chasseurs of the Guard, the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honor at his side, the Grand Cross of the Legion and the Iron Crown on his breast, the little three-cornered hat on his legs. It was thus that he disappeared from the view of man. His faithful little band departed from their prison on May 27th, 1821, and as a last favor from Sir Hudson Lowe, the ship assigned to them was a cattle ship supplying live stock to the Island, and it was in such a malodorous environment that they bid farewell to the man who was to remain in exile, even in death, for twenty years more.

In conclusion, the curious fact must be noted that Antommarchi found what he termed tuberculous excavations and tubercles in the left lung, yet Arnott, an eye witness at the autopsy, states that the lungs were normal. No mention of any clinical signs of tuberculosis are mentioned in the "Memoires" of the St. Helena group. All of the symptoms of his last illness clearly pointed to a gastric origin, and the autopsy definitely proved that a carcinoma with perforation was the cause of death.